

St Michael's RC Primary School

Clumber Street North, Elswick, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear, NE4 7RE

Inspection dates

2–3 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress because the quality of teaching is good. They achieve particularly well in their speaking, reading and writing skills. Pupils' writing is imaginative and interesting. They enjoy reading regularly at school and make good progress to reach at least average standards by the time they leave at the end of Year 6.
- Teachers and their assistants share high expectations and work together to create an atmosphere where pupils develop positive attitudes and, consequently, work hard. The teaching of reading and writing is particularly effective because teachers have good subject knowledge and plan work that interests pupils and helps them to reach higher standards.
- Pupils are delightfully enthusiastic and polite. Behaviour is always good so that disruptions to learning are rare. Pupils have a good understanding of the many cultures in the school and know that bullying and racism are not tolerated. They feel safe at school.
- The headteacher and senior leaders are dedicated and determined. Governors are knowledgeable and provide excellent challenge which helps to drive improvements. All leaders are ambitious in their endeavours to secure the best possible outcomes for pupils so that standards have been rising for a number of years and are now broadly average.
- Leaders regularly check the quality of teaching so that they know how good it is. Teachers welcome these checks and are ambitious in their desire to improve. This monitoring, together with good professional development, has helped to improve the quality of teaching, particularly in English, so that it is usually good.
- Christian values pervade the school so that all pupils, regardless of faith or background, are valued. Those pupils who enter the school at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language are quickly integrated and make excellent progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is outstanding and some still requires improvement.
- In most year groups standards in mathematics are lower than they are in English.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons taught by nine teachers, as well as making many shorter visits to lessons to look at pupils' work. Some of these observations also involved the headteacher.
- Inspectors talked to groups of pupils and heard others from Year 1, Year 2 and Year 6 read.
- There were two responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), which is not enough to provide a statistically meaningful overview. Inspectors, therefore, spoke to parents as they brought their children to school.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body, teachers, teaching assistants and a representative of the local authority who works with the school.
- The school's improvement plan and records of pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching, pupils' behaviour and safeguarding were examined.
- Twenty-one staff submitted their views via a questionnaire and inspectors took these into account.

Inspection team

Christine Cottam, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Julie McGrane

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St. Michael's is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportions of pupils both from a multi-ethnic background or who speak English as an additional language are higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is much higher than the national average. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.)
- There is a higher proportion of pupils supported through school action than found nationally. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is similar to the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has been awarded Healthy School status.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is always at least good and more is outstanding by:
 - making sure that pupils have enough opportunities to correct or improve their work themselves as a result of teacher marking, especially in mathematics
 - more closely matching the work set to the different abilities of pupils in each class
 - developing teachers' questioning skills so that pupils are more involved and are expected to think more deeply.
- Raise standards in mathematics throughout the school so that attainment at least matches that seen in English by:
 - developing curriculum plans that help teachers to tailor lessons to meet the needs of different ability groups and challenge those who are more able
 - ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in practical and realistic contexts in order to develop greater understanding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Most children start school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities that are well below those usually found, especially in their communication and language development. Good teaching helps them to make good progress, particularly in their speaking, physical and social skills. Despite this good progress, about half of the pupils start Year 1 with reading, writing and number skills that are below those usually found.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 to reach average standards in reading and writing by the end of Year 2. Pupils have a good understanding of their letters and sounds and this helps them to read and write accurately and with increasing fluency for their age.
- Pupils make good progress in writing throughout Key Stage 2 so that almost all pupils reach average standards by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6. This represents good achievement for them because their standards were below average at the end of Year 2. Teachers are particularly knowledgeable about how to teach writing and they have high expectations.
- Pupils in Year 6 can read accurately and with understanding. They enjoy reading regularly at school and particularly value visits to the local library.
- Standards in mathematics are lower than they are in English in all classes other than Year 6. In response to high-quality teaching, progress in mathematics accelerates in Year 6 as seen in the very recent test results where more than half of pupils reached above-average levels. The majority of pupils in Year 6 understand how to find the area of a rectangle and can do this accurately. More-able pupils have been challenged even further so that they are beginning to understand how to use a formula to calculate the area of a triangle.
- The gap between the attainment of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and that of those who are not eligible has closed completely in English so that both groups reach the same standards. The gap is also narrowing in mathematics, although those who are eligible for the pupil premium are almost a year behind those who are not. This shows that the school promotes equality of opportunity well.
- A significant minority of pupils join the school at an early stage of learning English. These pupils make exceptional progress so that they reach above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils who are supported at school action, school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs make good progress in reading and writing to reach higher standards than seen for this group nationally. Their progress is slower than this in mathematics.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The majority of teaching is good, with a small amount that is outstanding and some that requires improvement.
- Where teaching is good or better, it is because teachers have high expectations and plan interesting lessons that engage pupils so that they enjoy their learning and make good progress. Where teaching is less strong, it is because the work is not always matched well enough to the differing abilities of pupils.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge in English so that speaking, reading and writing are particularly well taught. Pupils are given good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills and this helps them to develop the content of their writing and vocabulary. This approach is also contributing to the excellent progress made by pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- Teachers are less confident in their mathematical knowledge, so that planning is not always

matched closely enough to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities and does not always stretch the more able. The exception to this is in Year 6 where mathematics teaching is excellent.

- Teachers mark work regularly so that pupils know how well they are doing and how they could improve. However, they do not always give pupils enough opportunities to respond to this marking, for example by practising further calculations or improving their writing.
- Teachers use questions well to find out what individual pupils know. Sometimes teachers only allow one pupil to answer, so that pupils spend too long listening instead of thinking or practising for themselves. Where teachers ask open-ended questions that expect pupils to explain their reasoning, pupils make better progress. This is not consistently the case.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school provides a nurturing environment where adults model positive relationships so that pupils thrive and grow in confidence. Pupils enjoy their lessons and have good attitudes to their work so that they always strive to do their best.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a flying start and make good progress in their social skills because good routines and constant praise positively reinforce high expectations of behaviour.
- This good behaviour management continues throughout the school with many opportunities for pupils to learn to cooperate and take responsibility for themselves and their community. For example, pupils recently wrote to their local councillor to persuade her not to close their community library. Their letters impressed her so much that they were passed to the local Member of Parliament and the library looks set to stay open.
- Pupils show high levels of respect and tolerance towards adults and each other. They are particularly positive about their friendships and the way their teachers look after them.
- Incidents of poor behaviour, bullying or racism are rare and when they do happen pupils say they are dealt with well. There have been no exclusions this year. Pupils have an excellent knowledge of all forms of bullying and a strong sense of right and wrong.
- Attendance is below average but it is improving. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent from school has reduced.
- Pupils have an excellent knowledge of safety. A recent internet safety day 'Connecting with Respect' helped pupils to understand how to stay safe online. Pupils know adults work hard in the school to keep them safe and, as a result, they feel safe.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders at all levels maintain a constant focus on the achievement and well-being of each and every pupil. Their determination has ensured that all pupils make good progress and that standards continue to rise. This demonstrates that the school has a good capacity to continue to improve.
- There are regular checks on pupils' progress so that any pupils who are at risk of falling behind are quickly identified and helped. This has been particularly successful in English where all pupils have made at least expected progress and many achieve better than this.
- Leaders regularly check the quality of teaching. Teachers welcome the feedback they receive and often ask for additional observations. This, together with professional development, is helping them to improve. The school has correctly identified the need to improve teaching still further and leaders are developing actions to achieve this.
- Procedures to manage the performance of teachers are effective because leaders use a range of information to set challenging targets. There is a good link between pay levels and the quality of teaching.
- The curriculum is good in English where pupils have opportunities to apply their reading and

writing skills across other subjects. There is a broad curriculum with good enrichment activities such as visits, after-school clubs and creative projects. These activities help pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

- The mathematics curriculum is less strong. This is because it does not help teachers to develop a precise understanding of what to teach pupils of different abilities in order to accelerate their progress. Nor does it provide enough practical 'real-life' opportunities to help pupils develop a better understanding of how to apply their skills in different contexts.

- The vast majority of parents are happy with the school and say they are kept well informed.

- There are strong partnerships which benefit the school. For example, a teaching assistant has the opportunity to train to become a teacher through a teacher training partnership.

- The local authority has provided good support through the visits of a headteacher who holds termly accountability meetings with senior leaders and governors and provides an accurate written evaluation of the school.

- All safeguarding requirements are met.

- **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are knowledgeable, ambitious and approachable. They visit the school regularly so that staff and pupils know them well. This means that they have a full understanding of the quality of teaching, know where it needs to improve and reward teaching which is good.
- Governors play a critical role in challenging plans for improvement and setting rigorous targets for the headteacher.
- Resources, including the pupil premium funding, are used effectively to raise standards for all pupils. A lack of bullying and racism, together with the good progress of all pupils, demonstrates that governors discharge their duty to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination extremely well.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	108511
Local authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	413120

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Rowley
Headteacher	Margaret Kerridge
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2010
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